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Senior high school students may now select as few as three of the five food items of the Type A lunch. But they must make sure they choose three different items.

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Senior high schools offer more choice



Teenagers may put fewer food items on their school lunch trays, but more of what they do put there will end up in their stomachs—and not in the garbage.

This is just one result many people anticipate from a new school lunch regulation that went into effect this year at senior high schools across the country. The regulation implements a provision of Public Law 94-105, the child nutrition legislation of 1975. Aimed at reducing plate waste, the provision calls for a change in the reimbursement policy for senior high schools, requiring these schools to “offer”, instead of “serve”, the Type A lunch.

What exactly does this mean?

Until this year, all schools taking part in the National School Lunch Program had to serve each student five items from four Type A lunch components—a serving of meat or meat alternate, two servings of vegetables and fruits, bread and milk.

Now schools serving senior high school students must still offer all of these five Type A items but students do not have to take all five if they do not intend to eat them. As long as students take at least three different food items, the schools can get credit for serving them “complete” lunches. This is particularly significant, since schools are reimbursed on the basis of complete lunches served.

Jerry Boling, manager of child nutrition programs for FNS, explains the thinking behind the new provision. “Teenagers are old enough to make decisions about what they eat,” he says, “and the

senior high school lunch program should reflect that. Forcing students to take foods they don’t want results in unnecessary waste.”

For years, school lunch managers have had to watch high school students throw away food they had been forced to take. But the managers had no alternative—if a student said he didn’t want a serving of bread, for example, the manager had to serve it to him anyway or forfeit reimbursement.

“This is just the problem the new provision is intended to remedy,” says Jerry Boling.

As Mr. Boling emphasizes, the new regulations affect only senior high schools. “That’s not because elementary and junior high schools don’t have plate waste—it’s a problem they’ve been struggling with for years,” he says.

“But there may be other ways to approach the problem with younger students, like making special efforts to encourage them to taste new foods.

“While we still want to encourage teenagers to eat complete nutritious lunches,” he says, “requiring them to take food is not the answer.”

In many schools the new choice system will provide students with a definite price advantage over the a la carte arrangement, in which they purchase each item separately. For example, at Fort Worth’s Wyatt High School, students taking part in the Type A lunch program pay 55 cents for a complete meal; the price is the same if they choose three, four, or five items. If bought a la carte, almost any three items would cost at least \$1.00.

Schools are taking a new approach to serving senior high school lunch customers. A new choice system lets these students select three, four, or five Type A lunch items.

Wyatt High School implemented the new choice system last winter with help from a student committee which worked closely with school food service officials. The following story tells how that committee got started and describes some of the ways committee members helped fellow students understand and use the new system.

Another story tells how one State school lunch coordinator addressed local concerns about the choice provision and suggested ways to make it work.

Student committee explains the new system

Like many other school districts across the country, the Fort Worth Independent School District introduced the new senior high school choice system at the start of the school year. District officials informed principals and cafeteria managers about the new procedure, and all 12 district senior high schools passed the word on to students in a series of announcements on the public address system. A local newspaper helped further explain the new procedure to students and their parents.

But despite these efforts, after several weeks of school, few students were taking advantage of the new system, and school officials were puzzled. Students had been asking for more choice for years; why didn’t they jump at the chance?

Mark Norenberg, assistant director for the district, put that question to the district’s school

lunch committee, which he had recently set up. The young registered dietician places a great deal of emphasis on student involvement in the lunch program, and setting up a student committee was one of his first projects after joining the staff of district director Blake Yager this year.

Mr. Norenberg hoped the committee would establish a line of communication between students and school food service officials, and it took no time at all to prove that he was right. The students eagerly offered their thoughts and suggestions on their first project—taste-testing various foods the district was considering adding to lunch menus. And they came through on the choice question as well.

"The students simply don't understand the new system," they told Mr. Norenberg.

New committee set up

Because he had been so pleased with the work of the student committee, Mr. Norenberg wondered if student involvement wouldn't be just what was needed to further explain the choice system. He decided to test his theory in one school and asked the staff at Wyatt High School what they thought of the idea.

They were enthusiastic, and right after Christmas, Mr. Norenberg had his first meeting with a nine-member committee appointed by vice principal LaVerne Parham. Committee members included sophomores, juniors, and seniors, selected on the basis of their participation in various campus activities—like athletics, debate, art, and drill team.

During the group's first meeting, Mr. Norenberg discussed school food service in general—how it operates and why, and some of the rules involved. Then he explained in detail the new choice system and asked students for their help in formulating a campaign that would get the message out and generate enthusiasm.

Students suggest improvements

The students eagerly accepted the challenge. But first, they said, there were some basic problems

that should be worked out. The cafeteria was a mess—thanks to diners who failed to clean up trash—and it lacked atmosphere.

These two things, claimed committee members, were the major causes of the low daily lunch participation. At the time, Wyatt's lunch program was serving about 450 students, just about a fifth of the potential customers. That's a particularly disappointing figure, considering that half the enrollment, freshmen and sophomores, aren't allowed to leave the campus for lunch.

So the group's first effort was a clean-up campaign, with committee members taking the lead in pushing brooms and urging fellow students to do their part. Public address announcements and posters reinforced the campaign, and student monitors reminded lunch customers that keeping the lunchroom clean is every student's responsibility.

As for the atmosphere, the committee named the cafeteria "The Roadrunner's Nest" in honor of the school's mascot, and produced colorful, wall-sized banners to further proclaim the theme. With the consent of Wyatt cafeteria manager Grace Bryson, who pretty well agreed to all of the suggestions, students also rearranged the tables and chairs, moving the long institutional-style tables into smaller seating arrangements.

Promoting the new system

With these improvements made, the committee was ready for the project at hand—informing students about the new choice system. Students from the drama class helped develop a series of announcements that were entertaining as well as informative. Announcements took the themes of two popular television shows—*Happy Days* and *Welcome Back Kotter*—and each morning characters from the shows explained how the system works.

"There's something new in our school lunchroom," the popular "Fonz" from *Happy Days* said. "You now have a choice, and if you ask me, that's good.

Of the five items on the menu, a guy only has to take three.

"The price is still the same," he said, "so all five is a real bargain. But if there's something you don't like, don't take it and waste it—or I'll waste you," he warned in his typical fashion.

One of the "Sweathogs" expressed the same idea in a slightly different way, calling the program a real "winner." "We can now choose three, four or all five of the items offered," he explained. "So if broccoli isn't your favorite, you don't have to take it."

Color-coding useful

The next step was further education and reinforcement where it counts most—namely in the cafeteria. Using crepe paper streamers, the school color-coded the serving lines. Placed directly over food items, the different colors identified the various components of a complete lunch. A poster outside the serving area used the same colors to explain the color system to students before they got in line.

This made the new procedure easy to understand, but a student-written and -designed brochure described the main reason for the change—to reduce food waste.

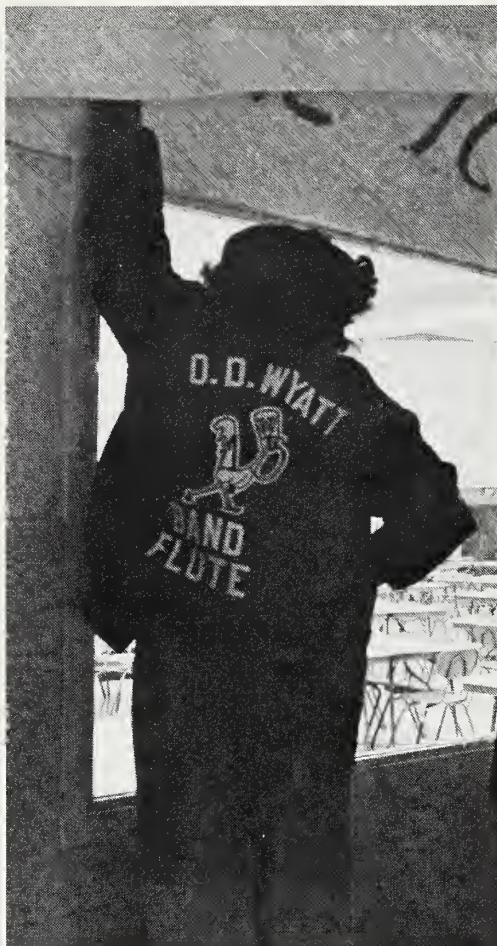
Available to all students, the brochure requested that everyone act as responsible young adults in regard to the lunch program. And apparently that approach is a good one because positive signs are showing up at Wyatt.

Many students are now taking advantage of the new choice system—some who really understand it and others who are merely "following the leader."

And there are others who understand they can choose three or four items, but prefer to take all five items.

As one such student explained, "I still get all of the lunch most days because I figure I pay for it all, so why not. Of course, I don't always finish everything, but I try to. And I sure feel guilty throwing things in the trash now. I never used to even think twice."

It's these "second thoughts" that just may make the difference.



At Wyatt, students paved the way for the new system by decorating the cafeteria (above). Color-coded serving lines make it easy to identify Type A items.

State coordinator addresses local concerns

Whenever there's a change in the school lunch program, State people play a key role in carrying out that change. It's largely up to them to get the word out to people in the local schools, and the new provision for high schools was no exception.

But much more was involved than just instructing the managers in what to do to meet the new requirements. State agencies recognized that most local school food service personnel had additional concerns and questions that needed attention. That's why States like New Jersey issued an eight-page guidance package, in question and answer form, addressing these "need to knows."

Many school food service managers had expressed concern that the new provision might weaken nutrition education in the lunch program. They did not welcome the prospect of the traditional Type A lunch becoming, as they put it, "just an option that students might either choose or refuse." After years of proudly serving well-balanced lunches, managers felt ill-at-ease, and in some cases openly displeased at what seemed a shift toward "give them what they want."

Some managers were also disturbed over the possibility that, if fewer students chose a lunch eligible for Type A reimbursement, meal production costs would rise.

And what about production? What if it became necessary to throw away a lot of unserved food? Wouldn't that just be shifting the waste into the kitchen? Weren't school food service managers simply being forced to work *harder* just to stay even?

Tough questions. But not unanswerable, at least from the viewpoint of Miriam Hughes McClellan, New Jersey's coordinator of food services in the State Department of Education. Providing reassurance and guidance, Ms. McClellan suggested ways of tack-

ling the challenge with assurance.

Effective merchandising of appealing, high-quality food items was already underway in many of the State's lunch programs. Ms. McClellan suggested that integrating the choice system into the larger merchandising effort might prove to be highly successful, in terms of increasing school lunch's popularity in senior high schools.

By getting to know their customers and using good forecasting techniques, she said, school lunch managers could expect to get a handle on the new system in a short time.

The State coordinator also encouraged managers to take a positive outlook and realize that their role in promoting good nutrition was more important than ever before.

The new provision does take an extra amount of planning, record-keeping, and imagination on the part of school food service managers, Ms. McClellan noted. But it's an effort that could pay off well in terms of increased participation and reduced food waste.

Below are some examples of how local school food service people are implementing the choice system and some of the results they're getting. In many cases they're doing just what Ms. McClellan suggested to New Jersey managers—they're integrating the choice system into a larger merchandising effort and getting to know their customers.

- The food service staff at Massachusetts Concord-Carlisle High School introduced the new choice system this year at the same time they switched to a "scramble serving system".

Replacing the school's single hot meal line and snack bar, the scramble system enables students to pick up their lunches at one of eight different stations. There's no more waiting in line to be served—now it's about a minute and a half from the time students enter the cafeteria until they reach one of three cashiers.

Big graphic signs in the food service area tell students where

to find hot lunches—served at two of the eight stations—and sandwiches served at the six "fast food stations." Fruits and vegetables are available at all of the stations, and students pick up milk at one of the two centrally located containers.

Because the school offers lots of variations, students have as many as 13 lunch options which meet or exceed minimum required food quantities. Students selecting grilled cheese, for example, can have sandwiches made with either Syrian or regular bread. And tuna fish lovers can have tuna subs or regular style sandwiches.

As school food service director Robert Thorborn says, the students choose what they like in quantities they can eat. And the result is minimal plate waste in an atmosphere which reflects respect for the student.

How do students feel about the new scramble system and about having more choice? Lunch participation has nearly doubled since September—jumping from 33 to 62 percent of the 1,600 student enrollment. And the school food service staff hopes to increase that even more.

- High school students in Halifax, North Carolina, started making their choices this year even before area schools started the choice system. That's because county school food service director Sabina Gould decided to find out what their food preferences are.

When she learned of the new school lunch provision, Ms. Gould enlisted the aid of one of her most cooperative principal-manager teams, J.J. Ray and Hattie Silver, at Eastman High School. Together they sent out a vegetable-fruit survey to the students.

On a checklist, students picked as their top choices: french fries, oranges, apples, vegetable soup, strawberries, corn, whipped potatoes, and tomatoes. Cabbage and carrot slaw, broccoli, purple plums and apricots got few votes.

As a result of this survey, Ms. Gould revamped her menus for all schools. But, she says, the plate waste problem isn't solved with

student-pleasing menus alone. And the entire school food service staff is working on *quality* food production, as well.

- San Jose senior high schools use posters with a five-pointed star to illustrate the "three out of five" concept. The posters announce what the district calls the "mini-combo" lunch and instruct students to select foods from at least three of the five groups represented by the points of the star.

District food service director Rosetta Holland reports that the mini-combos are steadily making converts of previous a la carte customers. They're realizing they can now often purchase a complete lunch for what they've been spending for a couple of items.

The more adult approach lets students make their own food choices and still enjoy a cost savings. And both students and cafeteria staff members are enthusiastic about the idea. Ms. Holland says that the flexibility in the new system is "the best thing to come around in a long time."

"Cafeteria managers are still feeling their way," she says, "but they've made the idea work for them by taking the basic requirements and adjusting until the system works smoothly.

- Several school districts in the Greater Lansing area of central Michigan are finding that the three-out-of-five system is stimulating participation in the National School Lunch Program.

The Lansing Public Schools, already offering multiple choice menus, saw participation increase 7 percent once students were allowed to take as few as three food items from the Type A lunch.

The Okemos Public School District, which instituted a multiple choice menu in conjunction with the new regulation, saw participation jump 70 percent. And, in the Waverly Public School District, where sales of a la carte items formerly accounted for a high percentage of cafeteria receipts, the implementation of the new senior high choice system has resulted in a whopping 120 percent increase in the sales of Type A lunches. ☆

Connecticut computerizes WIC operations

Although computers have often been associated with "dehumanization," they are now breathing new life into the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in Connecticut.

The recent growth of WIC in the State had made it increasingly difficult for local WIC agencies to handle the mounting paperwork and still respond to needs of recipients. Until this spring, 10 different local agencies operated their own food delivery, fiscal, and reporting systems, and the redundancies were enormous.

Each local WIC staff had to spend valuable time processing vouchers by hand, keeping and searching for records, managing food delivery systems, and working out individual redemption systems with local banks.

But now local staffs are largely freed from such time-consuming tasks, thanks to the State's new computerized delivery and recording system. Completed in May of this year, the system is one of three statewide computerized systems in New England. The Connecticut effort is particularly noteworthy because it is an FNS experiment to develop a WIC prototype for a computerized delivery and financial management system.

Can be adapted to any State

"We're developing a computer system which can be adapted to any State," explained Dick Tracey of the FNS automated data processing division. "The system will be available to all States, and although some modifications may be necessary, States will be able to save considerable development and planning money by using a proven system."

Data processing experts from

Washington and the FNS New England Regional Office in Boston worked out the new system, using suggestions from State and local officials as the basis. "What we wanted to develop in Connecticut was a system that would be convenient for participants and would also incorporate sound management practices," said David Mikelson, regional WIC director. "We think this system does both."

A valuable management tool

As with any computer system, the key to the operation is information. People feed information into the computer. The computer organizes, stores, and analyzes it, and feeds it back in a number of different forms. In this case, the computer brings together the full range of WIC program data. It maintains and feeds back information about recipients, vendors, and the issuance, exchange, and redemption of vouchers. And it analyzes this data to provide State and local staffs with a variety of reports which are immensely valuable in planning and managing a program that's efficient and responsive to recipients' needs.

The starting point in the Connecticut system is the information gathered by local agencies during certification. On a standardized "in-put" document, they record essential information about all new recipients: their names and addresses; the particular WIC food package they will receive; pertinent health indices; the dates they were certified; and the dates they will have to be recertified.

That document goes to the State WIC office, where keypunchers "plug" the information into the computer. The computer then "knows" exactly what WIC foods each participant should receive,

A new statewide system is benefiting program managers, local staffs, and participants in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. The system saves time and money, facilitates planning and program monitoring, and enables WIC staffs to provide more direct services to clients.

and periodically prints out the appropriate food vouchers for all participants in the State. It also prints out a complete listing of recipients and the serial numbers of the vouchers they will receive. Local agencies get this register each time they receive vouchers for distribution to recipients.

Why vouchers are important

"The beauty of the standardized voucher system is that each voucher contains significant information about the recipient," explains John Covert, Connecticut WIC director. "Using the voucher register, the local agencies can be sure each of their clients will get vouchers that indicate the proper food package.

"Just as important," he adds, "we can trace the path of the voucher from the recipient, to the grocer, and through the banking system to the State's central account. From this we can get valuable management data."

How do they do this? As Mr. Covert explains, in the Connecticut system, the vouchers travel through the banking system in much the same way as personal checks. Authorized grocers "cash" WIC vouchers at their local banks, which then forward the vouchers on to the bank which handles the WIC account. This bank compiles all the WIC vouchers and presents the State with a magnetic listing of the serial numbers and the amounts of vouchers that have been cashed.

"Once this information gets key-punched," says the State director, "our computer can tell us immediately who cashed a voucher, and where and when they cashed it. It can also give us reports on such things as participation, food package costs, and expenditures.

"In fact," he adds, "at any moment we can know just how much money is obligated, the number and location of participants, and the rate of redemption. This alerts us to when we need to request Federal funds."

As Mr. Covert sees it, this control over expenditures is one of the system's greatest advantages for the State agency. But he says the system also has equally significant advantages for local staffs and recipients.

For local agencies, the new system means more time to provide direct services to their clients. Since they're spending less time on paperwork, they have more time for such things as nutrition education and program monitoring. And, they can now readily determine whether recipients are purchasing all the prescribed foods and reporting for health and recertification appointments.

For participants, the new system means less time waiting in line to be certified or to pick up vouchers. In fact, the first time they will learn of the new system is when they come for their vouchers and are asked to sign the "voucher register." After that, the computer's visibility will be minimal.

Also, residence changes from one program to another no longer create confusion for participants. Previously, with the decentralized system, such changes meant participants had to adjust to new administrative procedures, unfamiliar vouchers, and different redemption practices. Very often in the administrative shuffle, a participant would fail to receive vouchers for some time. But with a centralized system, because data can be quickly and easily transferred from one area to another,

there is no lapse in benefits.

Food buying is more flexible

As John Covert explains, food buying is more flexible, too. "The new system will enable more stores to be authorized for the program. And, because there is a standardized food voucher, a WIC mother will be able to go to any authorized store in the State," he says. "That's progress."

Any way you look at it, in fact, the system seems to spell progress.

As new local agencies are brought into the program, they can be plugged into the statewide system with a minimum of difficulty. The costly startup of a local delivery system is eliminated.

Accountability is enhanced. Overcharging for foods can be traced back to the grocer. And stolen vouchers can be deleted before reimbursement is made.

Totally new types of reports will help State and local agencies spot problems and deliver needed services. For example, one report will alert program nutritionists of participants who do not cash all of their vouchers. The nutritionists can make special efforts to meet with these participants to find out if there is a reason for this. The nutritionist may discover that a mother isn't buying milk or some other item because her child is allergic to it, or because it's not compatible with the family's cultural preferences. In response, the nutritionist can modify the mother's food package to accommodate such problems.

"The benefits clearly extend beyond fiscal considerations," says John Covert. "The new system is giving program staffs the ability to tailor services to individuals to a far greater degree than was ever possible before." ☆

A county saves its lunch program

Faced with lack of funds to build or remodel kitchens for 15 schools, Tennessee's Washington County looked for a different approach to school food service. Now all schools are part of a satellite system, with food prepared at four central sites. Schools use one or two serving patterns--cafeteria dining and room service. State school lunch officials say Washington County's program proves satelliting can work in rural as well as urban areas.

They arrive at 7 o'clock each morning; by 2 o'clock each afternoon, the 13 workers in the Jonesboro Middle School kitchen have not only prepared, transported and served over 2,000 lunches, but they have also left a spotless kitchen ready for the next day's work.

This is called efficiency, and it has evolved from the efforts of the school food authorities in Washington County, Tennessee, to keep their lunch program alive.

Just a few years ago, Jonesboro Middle School was one of the county's 15 schools which had on-site kitchens, and the system was anything but efficient. School food service managers faced many problems—obsolete kitchen equipment, inadequate storage facilities, vandalism, and most of all, not enough money. Washington County school food service supervisor Virginia Campbell says of the situation, "The managers kept getting deeper and deeper into financial trouble. We were always cutting labor and changing menus just to survive."

Marilyn Haga, school food service consultant for the Tennessee Department of Education, explains, "We realized that if we are going to survive, we're going to have to become more like commercial food service, which look at the whole process of school food services as a system."

"There's just no way all these little tiny kitchens can make it financially, not in this day and age," she says. "We don't have PTA's out raising money to keep the cafeteria going any more. School food service is a business. It provides a service without making a profit, but it's still a business."

Washington County began a



Baking gets underway at one of the four food preparation sites.

satellite system of preparing and transporting lunches in 1971, when the Board of Education found itself without the money to rebuild kitchens for its 15 schools. None of the schools had adequate facilities or storage space. Some schools had to rent space elsewhere to store their USDA-donated foods, and many even had to place refrigerators in school hallways and gymnasiums.

Four kitchens remodeled

To implement the satellite system, the county remodeled four of its school kitchens, converting them to central preparation sites, complete with cooking equipment and food storage facilities. Factory representatives trained the kitchen workers on the use of the new equipment and on quantity food preparation. The county's other schools were converted to receiving sites. At each, a small part-time staff serves the meals and cleans trays and serving pans.

According to Ms. Campbell,

installing the satellite arrangement cost thousands less than remodeling each kitchen. "Whereas it would take about \$75,000 to \$80,000 to fully remodel a small school kitchen to make it serviceable," she says, "we had to spend only \$10,000 to \$15,000 to install a dishwasher and buy new tables and transport carts."

Each of the production sites has a large storage room which is called the "ingredient room." The room is kept closed, and one person is in charge of removing the food to be used that day. This makes it easier to control stock and to standardize recipes.

The ingredient room concept has made inventories easier, too. Purchased foods are kept on one side of the room; donated foods are kept on the other. Separate inventories are maintained for each. Cans are kept in cases to make counting easier, and each case is marked with the date received and the price paid.

Maintaining supplies only at the large production sites has also eliminated the county's vandalism problem. When all schools had their own kitchens, hardly a week went by without a break-in. So far, there have been no attempts to break into the large kitchens.

Saves money and time

County officials say the new system is resulting in cost savings in a number of areas.

First, because of the reduction in the number of preparation sites, overhead costs are down.

Second, labor costs are 20 percent of what they were before the satellite service was introduced.

And, food costs have been cut drastically. The county saves considerable amounts by purchasing in bulk, using comparison pricing, and having food delivered to 4 instead of 15 sites. In the first year of central buying, the county saved \$50,000 in food costs alone, and that figure has been higher in subsequent years.

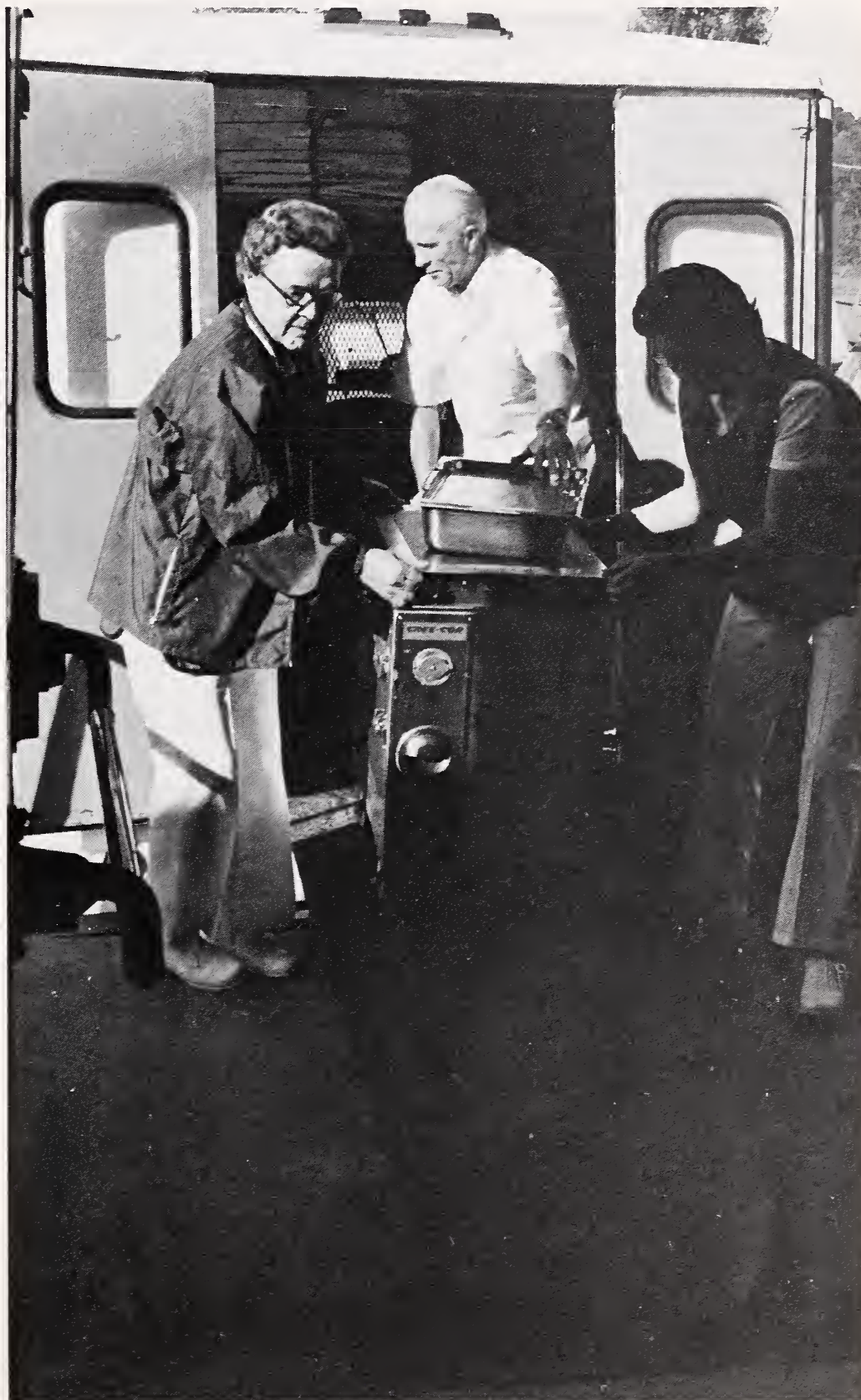
Simplifies accounting

Reports and records for the county are much easier to maintain under the new system. The sites submit production records,

inventories, and invoices to be combined in the county office.

In addition to recordkeeping, the food service managers go to the schools each week to sell meal tickets. The principals and teachers do not have to handle tickets or take any applications; they are responsible only for the supervision of the students.

At the Jonesboro Middle School kitchen, the cafeteria workers take a team approach. Two people are assigned to prepare each of the major lunch components—entree, bread, salad, vegetables, and dessert. They follow strict preparation plans and keep daily production records. Each team is responsible for its own area



The school staff helps move the transport carts into the kitchen.

of the kitchen. One worker who is not assigned to a specific duty works as the dishwasher, and also helps serve at Jonesboro Middle. The two men on the kitchen staff load the transport carts onto the delivery trucks and also help the food preparation teams.

The food, prepared in large pans, is loaded into transport carts which have been chilled, frozen, or heated. Cooking for transport is a little different than cooking for immediate service. For example, bread is baked, but not thoroughly browned because it continues to brown in the heated carts while being delivered.

Deliveries begin at 9 o'clock each morning. The men who drive the delivery trucks are paid by the food service; often they also work for the county as school bus drivers. And, some preparation site workers go to the receiving schools to help serve.

At the receiving schools, the transport carts are rolled from the truck into the kitchen area where they are heated electrically. Each cart has two cords—one for use at the preparation site and one for the serving site. Following lunch, the delivery men return to the preparation sites with the transport carts, the clean serving pans, and the money collected that day.

Two serving approaches

The satellite system in Washington County combines the central preparation and transport operation with two serving patterns—cafeteria dining and room service. The county's two high schools, both preparation sites, prepare meals to be transported to other schools, but they also prepare additional choice items for the students who come to the high school cafeterias for lunch.

The county's younger students have "room service." The idea of an architect who wanted to eliminate the traditional expense of building dining rooms in each school, the room service concept has proven beneficial in a number of ways.

At first, some school administrators were reluctant to try the idea, but they quickly changed their

minds. Ms. Campbell remembers what happened when room service was introduced in one school: "Originally, we were going to do room service only for smaller children," she said, "but the principal liked it so well that now room service includes everyone. We had to beg him to do room service at first—now he thinks it was his idea."

The teachers were also dubious when the system was initially proposed. They complained about the prospect of eating lunch with the children. But now they see it as a good learning experience for everyone. And they've even gotten involved in nutrition education. The teachers not only eat with the students, they also supervise them, help them open their milk cartons, and encourage them to try new foods.

In the schools with room service, students eat in a quiet, relaxed, and familiar setting. This is especially important for very young children for whom going into a large dining room without a familiar adult can be a frightening experience.

And the youngsters are sitting at tables and chairs scaled for them—another reason why room service makes the meal more enjoyable for younger students. Ms. Haga points out, "Sometimes in a cafeteria, the very small children are sitting with their noses practically in their trays. Bless their hearts—no wonder they don't want to eat lunch; they can't see what they're eating."

As far as sanitation is concerned, schools have found they have fewer accidents with food in the classrooms than they used to have in the cafeterias. The children no longer have to go through a serving line and carry trays.

Serving lunch also takes less time with room service. In 30 minutes, an entire school of 350 young children can be served—far more than with a conventional lunch line. Payment is all done in advance—each school has its own cash register, which is rolled into the classroom before the lunch cart arrives. All transac-

tions are rung through the register to give a permanent record.

"We go for speed more than anything else," says principal Earl Henley at Jonesboro Elementary School. "We want to get the food to the kids and give them plenty of time to eat . . . I like the quickness of it. We used to start serving at 10:30 and go until 1:00.



A teacher helps serve lunch in a school with room service.

I just despised it."

As for the quality of the food, Mr. Henley says the meals are better than those prepared at his previous school, which had on-site preparation. "The food is delivered at 9:30, and at serving time, the food is still hotter than any we used to get from the other cafeteria."

"But," Ms. Haga warns, "it's very important that you understand how to do room service and how to do it correctly. I'll be the first to admit that."

Problems can arise if workers do not fill the trays fast enough to get them to the children hot, if the teachers do not properly supervise the children, or if the janitors don't want to clean up.

Converting to a satellite lunch system has solved many of Washington County's immediate food service problems. It has resulted in greater control over the quality of food, less waste, substantial savings from centralized buying, reduced equipment and labor

costs, and less vandalism. It has also simplified reporting.

An added benefit accrued from the new system is increased flexibility. Since schools and school systems like Washington County's continuously change, satelliting has proven to be a good plan because it can be expanded and easily modified.



Lunch is a hot meal, the same as that served in the cafeteria.

Ms. Campbell says, "This system is so adaptable that a week before school starts, they can say, 'O.K., we're moving children to such-and-such a building. Can you get their lunches there?' And within a week, you can make arrangements to get the lunches to them. You can gather a small amount of equipment and you're ready to go, whereas, if you were doing onsite preparation, there would be no way you could make changes that easily."

As an example, Ms. Campbell cites the situation last year at Midway School. Because of an unexpected increase in kindergarten enrollment, the children were reassigned to an unequipped school at the last minute. In order to begin a meal service, all the school food service department had to do was move a milk box from another building.

In contrast, Marilyn Haga says, "There's a school system in another part of Tennessee with a school that has become so over-

crowded that they've had to make classrooms out of the dining room and kitchen. Those school-children are bagging their lunches until a new cafeteria is built. If they had had a transporting system, they could have served the children without interruption. Now, we probably will lose a lot of those children because they will

be into the habit of bringing their lunches, and they'll never get back into the program."

Thanks to the new satellite system, Washington County schools have few worries about losing their lunch customers—the county has a constant participation rate of almost 80 percent. ☆



Students eat in the familiar surroundings of their classroom.

Food stamp outreach

Outreach is essential to any assistance program. Here are some ways State and local groups are helping inform people about the Food Stamp Program.

Kansas has a mobile van that visits rural areas

In southwest Kansas, distances are great and communities are few and far between. Last spring, the Liberal Office of Social and Rehabilitation Services equipped a mobile unit to cover this rural area in an effort to make the Food Stamp Program more accessible to the needy.

Five members of the Income Maintenance Staff—supervisor Beatrice Fuller and social workers Don Slimmer, Dennis Hayzlett, Jerry Nelson, and Greg Wetz—visited 12 towns in the district, passing out literature and talking with passersby. For those members of the community who were unable to come by the “food stamp van,” the staff left information in grocery stores—which planned to use their literature as bag stuffers—schools, post offices,

laundries, churches, and libraries.

Staff members say the van was a real eyecatcher—with red, white, and blue posters filling the side windows. One poster contained a list of the services offered by the Social and Rehabilitation Services, including the Food Stamp Program. Another poster declared “Food Stamps” in large, bold letters, and listed the six certification offices in the Liberal District, along with their telephone numbers. In the rear windows, two official USDA posters explained what food stamps can and cannot buy. Equipped with a table and chairs, the interior of the van served as a distribution center for food stamp information.

In each town, the mobile van generated considerable interest among community leaders. For instance, a retired probate judge in Morton County took several pieces of literature, saying that she planned to share the information with other senior citizens who might not know about the program. Another individual, who drove 17 miles to obtain information on the program, said he planned to use the literature to encourage others to apply for food stamp benefits. This man found out about the van through an advance story on the front page of the local newspaper.

Many other people expressed interest in the program and indicated they might know a friend or relative who could qualify for benefits. A few even had suggestions on how to improve the program. A town’s postmistress said she thought she knew someone who would be interested, and the very next day the person applied for food stamps.

Staff members agreed that the mobile approach is successful in reaching people. And, thanks to their efforts, more people in the Liberal District know about the food stamp program and its goals.

Girl Scouts seek out the elderly in Kentucky

In Kentucky, the Girl Scouts have joined hands with the Department of Human Resources to help find people who are in need of food stamps. They’re focusing their efforts on reaching the elderly, and in one effort, they visited several of Louisville’s senior citizen apartment complexes. They set up shop for an afternoon, hung out a sign saying “Food Stamp Information Booth,” and waited for business. The wait was short, the business good, the questions and the answers many.

The longer the Scouts peopled the information booths, the more curiosity and genuine interest they stirred. News travels fast in an apartment complex. Some people, by chance, discovered the Scouts and hurried to their rooms to call their neighbors, who in turn, came to ask questions.

Before helping with the Human Resources Department, many of the Girl Scouts didn’t know what food stamps were, or how people could get them. They say working on the project has taught them a lot about the program and about the hardships they have never experienced themselves.

Says Janet Bischof, vice-president of the Kentuckiana Girl Scout Council, “The project has made me think more. I now realize that a lot of people don’t have good diets and are not aware of the help the Food Stamp Program offers.”

The Kentuckiana Girl Scout Council in Louisville and the Licking Valley Girl Scout Council in Covington have been working on the food stamp project for several months. In all areas they visit, the Girl Scouts are passing out information, giving answers to simple questions, and telling people where they should go to apply for stamps. The Scouts are reaching out particularly to the elderly who need an income boost.

Jackee Winkler, food stamp outreach worker who first asked the Scouts if they'd like to help the Human Resources Department, says, "Many senior citizens are retired, have low, fixed incomes, and must contend with rising rent, food, and utility costs as well as high medical expenses. Many of them really need food stamps, but don't know the first thing about how to get them."

Ms. Winkler believes the Girl Scout project is a success because the girls are truly interested and show a deep regard for the health of others. "The way I see it," she explains, "most older people like young people. And, if someone they like suggests they try applying for food stamps, they just might!"

At one of Louisville's apartment complexes for senior citizens with low incomes, a woman stopped by the Scout's information booth and said she had applied a long time ago, but had not qualified. Since then, her medical bills and living expenses had increased, but her income had stayed the same. The Scouts urged her to apply for food stamps again. Later, a lean, grey-haired man, who walked with a cane, said he'd considered stamps but he didn't like to wait in line. The Scouts encouraged him to make the effort.

Scout leaders say the project is benefiting the girls as well as the elderly people they're meeting. "Different projects like this one help the different Girl Scout troops keep in touch with each other," says Marty Woelfel, a troop advisor and member of the Kentuckiana Council Senior Planning Board. "We were looking for a project that all of us could work on together, something troops couldn't really do on their own."

How do the girls like the project? They say they're learning, they're having a good time, and, most of all, they are pleased to be helping people who are in need.

North Carolina volunteers talk to food store customers

Since food stamps are used at grocery stores, the Volunteers of Iredell County, North Carolina, felt that there could be no better place to talk about food stamps than the local supermarket.

An operator of three large supermarkets in Statesville thought the suggestion was excellent, so he gave the workers 100 percent cooperation. Through his regular newspaper ads, bag stuffers, and radio spots, he told the public that the Volunteers would be at two of the three stores all weekend to answer any questions about the Food Stamp Program.

The Women Volunteers, representing the Jayettes, Owlettes, Yokefellow Reconciliation Task Force, and two other groups, were briefed and given ample supplies of literature for the undertaking.

Louise Doyle, supervisor of the food stamp program in Iredell County, was excited about the results. She said many of the shoppers stopped by the food stamp booths to talk about the program. "I feel," said Ms. Doyle, "that the Volunteers did a marvelous job of explaining the program."

County workers in Mississippi travel in marked cars

In Coahoma County, Mississippi, outreach workers originated an idea that has been successful throughout the State in spreading the food stamp story. They did it in a very simple and inexpensive way—they designed magnetized signs for cars which read: "Food Stamp Outreach Workers—State Department of Public Welfare."

Ester Denson, Mississippi's outreach coordinator, says other counties are now using the signs with equal success. Whether the worker drives up at a shopping center, a school meeting, or a church, he or she is immediately recognized as someone who will explain the Food Stamp Program.

Says Ms. Denson, "If you pass through Mississippi and happen to see a crowd of people following a car, don't mistake it for a UFO. It's just another county outreach worker reaching people."

South Carolina uses specially designed posters

The State of South Carolina has developed some unusual and attractive food stamp posters. And according to outreach coordinator Clark Hawthorne, there's plenty of evidence they're helping to tell the food stamp story.

In huge letters, the message begins, "Food Stamps May Be The Answer To Your Needs." Like

many similar posters, the message then gives some facts about the program and lists locations of the nearest food stamp offices. The unusual feature is that a container filled with food stamp literature is attached to the front of the sign. It says, "Please take one."

Mr. Hawthorne says the special posters can be found at churches, schools, welfare offices, and other places where people might congregate. He knows they are effective because he stays busy keeping the containers filled.

Kentucky staff presents a puppet show

Puppeteers sell all types of products on television, so Norma Johnson of the Governor's Office of Volunteers in Kentucky, wondered if they could not sell the Food Stamp Program, too.

To find out, she started presenting a special show at all kinds of gatherings—from meetings of professional organizations to county fairs. The shows feature a little mouse, who wants to get on the Food Stamp Program, but doesn't understand it, and an extroverted lion, who answers all the questions in a simple but often humorous manner.

Members of the State's food stamp office say the puppet show grasps everyone's attention and holds it until Ms. Johnson has completed her message.

"Not everyone", says Jackee Winkler, Kentucky outreach coordinator, "has someone available with Norma Johnson's talent, but if they do, I heartily recommend the puppet show as a vehicle for telling the food stamp story."

A Chicago coalition operates a food stamp hotline

In a city of modern high rises, the offices of the Eighth Day Center for Justice seem like a throwback to the past. They're located in an old building on Chicago's busy State Street, with its constant noise of passing elevated trains. Despite all the commotion, the center's staff works diligently on their task of getting information to people who need food help. To date, the center's telephone hotline system has informed more than 25,000 needy citizens of the availability of food stamps and other forms of assistance.

The center was established almost 8 years ago, when several people from various religious communities joined forces to reduce hunger in Chicago. Sister Dorothy Gartland, the center's hunger program director, explained that these people were alarmed at how severe the hunger problem was and felt they could supplement the efforts of Illinois' outreach activity by forming a group to do outreach on an independent basis.

The name itself—the Eighth Day Center for Justice—came about after much deliberation. "Initially, we called ourselves the Center for Peace and Justice," explains Sister Gartland. "But, we didn't include peace because we believe there's no peace without justice. We decided on our present name because we feel that God, in His creation of the world—6 days of creation and a seventh day of rest—left it up to people to make this world a better place in which to live. As a result of this philosophy, we think of ourselves as the eighth day of creation in continuing the work He began."

After visiting Washington, D.C., and finding what independent outreach work was being done throughout the United States, the group began its hotline system in January 1975. The main purpose of the hotline is to refer people to the proper agencies so they can apply for food stamps or other food assistance. But, the center also prescreens applicants before making referrals.

Sister Gartland says, "We ask for a description of assets, resources, type of income, and so forth, like any State caseworker would. We follow the same guidelines as the State in assessing an applicant's eligibility, since we are here to save him or her time. After the screening, if we think they're eligible, we refer the callers to the proper welfare office, and if we think they're ineligible, we explain why. However, we're careful not to discourage them from applying after our screening. Sometimes we may miss something. But we feel that, if we can educate these people about the kinds of assistance available to them, we've done our job."

According to media coordinator Virginia Gorsche, the pre-screening is an extra step that's compatible with the center's emphasis on treating potential applicants with respect and dignity. "By providing a human and sometimes sympathetic approach," she says, "we try to make it easy for a person to supply all the facts essential for being properly evaluated. Some-

times, that extra patience has made the difference."

Getting the housing and equipment needed to begin the hotline took considerable effort.

The group spent hours contacting major industries and food companies in the Chicago area, seeking cash support or services to help offset costs for telephone, printing, and the rent. According to Audrey Denecke, volunteer director and hotline supervisor, the work of organizing didn't stop when the hotline started operating. The group is still working to interest other religious groups and neighborhood organizations.

Cooperation is important

"In the beginning," says Ms. Denecke, "we numbered close to 70 different groups. Even though all these groups are not still involved, we have added others, and our contacts are growing. We're hoping this trend will continue. In fact, we hope our interest will lead to the formation of hotlines in individual communities."

Ms. Denecke continues, "It's important that we have this type of cooperation in case the center has to close. We could be forced to close at any time, since most of us are either volunteers, or subsidized under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. In this eventuality, we're hoping community hotlines will already be able to operate on their own."

The center is contacting newspapers and radio and television stations to enlist their aid in reaching the public. "It's a matter of survival for the hotline that we seek exposure through the media effectively if the community is to know us and what we're about." Ms. Gorsche adds, "When there is good media coverage, the telephones get really busy."

"You'd be surprised at how many people have a fear of big government. Because we're primarily self-supporting and receive few State or Federal subsidies, people feel somewhat more comfortable about calling our hotline number than they would about calling a government agency's number."

More projects underway

The center is now beginning to expand its activity beyond a telephone hotline system, and expects to set up outreach programs in various Chicago communities in the near future. Joy Williams, the center's community outreach director, believes it's mandatory to "get from behind the desks and go out to actually contact the people."

"We feel that the best way to tell people about food stamps is through personal visits. This is especially true with senior citizens, who often find it hard to understand, after years of self-support, that someone wants to help them pay for their meals."

"To many, applying for help is like being a failure. What we're trying to do is help the people understand what the Food Stamp Program is all about and why they should seek assistance."

In addition to getting information to the needy, the center is also working to help inform other organizations about hunger-related developments and statistics. Ed Sunshine, Eighth Day's community relations coordinator, is currently developing a "hunger workbook." The book will have four sections, including two sections that provide instructions on where to go for immediate assistance, as well as information on the various food programs designed to meet long-term needs—like food stamps and Meals-on-Wheels.

"We believe there's a need for one book which explains all the food assistance programs that are available," says Mr. Sunshine.

"We also intend to include an evaluation of current hunger programs in operation, with recommendations to improve them at local, State, and national levels."

A third section on "making the system work" will include information on rights of recipients and on programs to teach them to deal with specific problems.

For instance, this section will describe the Senior Legal Assistance Project, which has just been funded under the Older American's Act. And it will outline programs useful not only to people with crucial food needs but to anyone seeking information on food co-ops, nutrition, consumer awareness, farm programs, and gardening projects.

The final section of the workbook will deal with national and international food needs, and it will have statistics and information on hunger in other countries.

A shared concern

The workbook is just one more way the center is making it easier for people to get information about food help. And usually, "the right information" is all most people need in order to solve their own problems, explains Beverly Serbousek, who handles special inquiries or problems.

Ms. Serbousek's words reflect the concern and eagerness to help others shared by everyone at the center. As Sister Gartland puts it, "People have a right to eat. And, for whatever reason, at that point in their lives, if they are not able to eat, they have a right to know of programs established to provide food assistance. Hopefully, our efforts will help accommodate that right." ☆

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